



## **Testimony for Appropriations Committee Health Subcommittee**

**H.B. No. 7027 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNium ENDING JUNE  
THIRTIETH 2019, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR**

**By Jill Spinetti, President and CEO**

**The Governor's Partnership to Protect Connecticut's Workforce  
DBA The Governor's Prevention Partnership  
February 23, 2017**

Good afternoon Senator Gerratana, Senator Somers, Representative Dillon, Representative Betts and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jill Spinetti and I am the president of The Governor's Prevention Partnership.

**I'm here today to ask for your support to keep the state's prevention infrastructure intact so that our young people can grow and thrive in nurturing families and communities.**

The Governor's Prevention Partnership has empowered families and communities for over 28 years to reduce the risk of substance abuse, bullying, and violence among Connecticut youth. Our seasoned team of prevention professionals works with parents, schools, and organizations to provide effective prevention and intervention strategies to help young people stay safe, drug-free, and thrive in their communities and personal lives.

We are a convener, an innovator, and a catalyst for change, a funder, a thought leader and an advocate. We provide new and cutting edge approaches and support to our partners so that they may implement the most effective programs.

**Since we were here last year, we have leveraged the dollars that we have received through the state's investment to secure an additional \$2.2 million in grants over the next three years to better support Connecticut youth.**

These grants focus on several areas

- **Chronic absenteeism:** The AmeriCorps project in the federally designated Promise Zone in Hartford serves more than 300 youth who have been identified as or at risk for being chronically absent. By providing 10 full-time EdCorpsCT members in the school, the members act as mentors, additional classroom support, work with families and youth, and ultimately, the findings from the project will be used to inform best practices on how to reduce chronic absenteeism across the state.
- **Reduce youth substance abuse:** The United Health Foundation is supporting another project in Hartford to reduce substance abuse among Latino youth in fourth through twelfth grades. To address the opioid and heroin epidemic in Hartford, CT, The Partnership will provide support and resources to Hispanic/Latino youth and their families to reduce factors that make substance abuse more likely and that negatively impact their health and well-being through a culturally responsive public awareness campaign and working with a local program partner to strengthen the connections between families and community supports to increase opportunities for

intervention, but also empower parents and families to build their skills and confidence in their ability to influence their children's behavior and prevent substance abuse.

- **Expand youth mentoring:** Last year, I spoke about our work with youth in the juvenile justice system of care and our creation of the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Mentoring Network, where we work with youth across the state in the hopes of reducing chronic absenteeism. After working on cultivating a relationship with the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, including hosting the administrator in Connecticut for a symposium last spring, we were able to secure an enhancement grant to this project that will focus on youth-initiated mentoring for 500 youth in the state.

All our work is done through partnership whether with schools, community programs or corporations – we are joined today by some of our program partners from across the state – you'll hear from Bianca, who was selected to be part of the Governor's Youth Cabinet; you'll hear from Brittany Baines who founded the Phenomenal I Am mentoring program in New Haven; you'll also hear from Kyesha and Taylor, who are two young women who work with us serving young people in Hartford, but have also benefitted from the power of mentoring themselves.

As a public-private partnership, we have been fortunate that the General Assembly and DMHAS have been leaders on prevention – thank you for your support. The dollars that The Partnership receives from state government are met 100% by private, corporate investments.

I recognize that your work is difficult at times, balancing the needs of your constituents with what the state is able to afford, but I'd ask you to consider the words of Frederick Douglass, ***"It's easier to build strong children than repair broken men."*** Investing in prevention efforts will create future cost-savings. Your investment today of less than ½ million will save the state at least \$5,000,000.

**I urge you to support The Partnership and other youth prevention initiatives at the maximum funding possible.**

In the days and months ahead, I ask for your continued financial support. In order to be an active, timely, nimble organization that continues to stay out in front of issues, we must take strong confident steps towards innovation today. We must continue to expand our capacity, and we can only do that through your continued support.

Thank you.

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